

SERIES 1999-2000
CIRCULAR LETTER: C-14

TO: Superintendents of Schools
Directors of Special Education
School Principals
Test Coordinators

FROM: Theodore S. Sergi, Commissioner of Education

SUBJECT: CMT/CAPT Testing – 2000-2001 and the
Participation of Special Education Students

DATE: March 17, 2000

INTRODUCTION

As we continue to strive “to reach every student,” statewide, district-by-district, and school-by-school, 2000-2001 should be a year of significant progress in assessing a greater proportion of our student population total. In fact, the message of this letter is to ask for your leadership in embracing a new attitude, policy and practice of providing most special education students with our general curriculum and standard assessments.

As you are probably aware, the 2000-2001 school year begins the next generation of the Connecticut Mastery Test (CMT) and Connecticut Academic Performance Test (CAPT) as well as the new federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) special education testing requirements. Under IDEA, all special education students must be assessed in grades 4, 6, 8, and 10, and the Department must report the statewide and district data in a manner that is informative, useful and comparable. The Department has developed two alternate assessments for those special education students for whom taking the standard state tests is inappropriate. In a commentary to the proposed Federal regulations (Federal Register, October 1997, pg. 55055), the U.S. Department of Education expects 80 percent or more of all special education students will participate in the standard assessments, and that 20 percent or less of the special education population will participate in the Alternate Assessments.

NEW EXPECTATIONS

Beginning with the fall 2000 CMT testing, it is the Department's expectation, consistent with the federal expectations, that approximately 80 percent or more of all special education students should participate in the standard grade level versions of statewide tests. Given that, on the 1998 CMT, approximately 64 percent (final 1999 CMT exemption rates will not be available until May) of the special education population participated in whole or part on the standard CMT, there is a need to modify our state guidance and local practices and to develop a new perspective on participation in and exemption from the standard tests.

ACTIONS

We believe it is critical for you to begin now:

- to review your special education identification procedures,
- to examine the percent of special education students in your schools and district exempted from the standard CMT/CAPT tests in the past,
- to communicate the new 80 percent or more expectation and the revised guidelines to all staff,
- to specifically inform the Planning and Placement Teams (PPT) about these changes, and
- to audit PPT recommendations for 2000-2001, to ensure districtwide progress.

In order to maximize the number of special education students participating in standard assessments, the exemption of special education students, from the standard CMT and CAPT in 2000-2001, must become the exception. The Department is prepared to have its staff work with any district requesting help in achieving the goal of at least an 80 percent participation rate.

The key to making testing decisions is predicated on the instructional program in which your special education students participate. The vast majority of special education students should be learning and experiencing the same critical skills and concepts that are deemed important for all Connecticut students, but in a different manner and/or in a different timeframe. We are urging all superintendents, special education directors and school principals to ensure the PPT process provides special education students equal access to the standard curriculum and assessments, while providing appropriate adaptations and modifications for their successful learning.

Alternate Assessment #1 is the use of out-of-grade-level CMT tests, (grades 2, 4, 6, 8 available), designed for those special education students who have not as yet received instruction on the curriculum/content/skills assessed with the standard grade level version of the CMT/CAPT. The expectation is that only 15 percent or less of the special education students in any district would need to take Alternate #1. Therefore, for example, a small number of 6th grade special education students may be assessed using a grade 2 or 4 CMT based on the PPT decision as to the test most closely representing the most recent instruction of that student. A grade ten special education student could be recommended for any level CMT, in place of CAPT.

Alternate Assessment #2 is a new standardized developmental checklist which is designed for severely impaired students who do not participate in a general education curriculum, but receive a “functional” program. The expectation is that less than 5 percent of the special education population in any district would need to take Alternate #2.

These percentage rates of 15 percent and 5 percent, per grade level tested, represent the maximum parameters for participation in each alternate assessment. Districts unable to stay within these parameters will be identified for on-site audit by the Department, will be required to provide an analysis of all exemptions, and will be provided direct state assistance where necessary. An appendix in the attached Guidelines includes each district’s 1998 participation rate.

REPORTING

Districts and schools will continue to receive detailed test score reports in late December. Districts should expect that the Department will also provide district and statewide information on the numbers and percentages of students tested on each type of assessment. At the time of the release of state scores (early February), district scores will be provided separately for non-special education students, special education students taking the standard assessment, and then together for all students assessed - which we currently report. Where necessary, districts not meeting the target special education participation rate, and without other acceptable justification, will be flagged (as not comparable) in the reporting formats. District progress from 1998 and 1999 to 2000, in significantly increasing the participation of special education students, will be noted. State reports (by district) for Alternate Assessments #1 and #2 will not be by score but only by the number of students.

Many of you are aware that the Department has considered and decided against providing "adjusted" CMT/CAPT scores which reflect the exemption rate of each district. A few other states use this method to provide comparability of scores and to compel the assessment of all students. We are striving to have assessment and reporting systems, without artificial adjustment, that promote the most appropriate educational program and assessment of learning for each child, without incentives or penalties built into the reporting process.

We are obligated to ensure that each child receives the highest quality education and has the opportunity to learn the critical skills and competencies assessed on our standard tests. Furthermore, we must meet our state statutory requirements and comply with the new federal regulations. The PPT decision should still be based on an individual case-by-case basis – but with these new expectations as the new context for these decisions.

On a related note, while the state law still provides for the CMT/CAPT exemption of bilingual education and English as a second language students for up to three years...the bilingual education state law was also amended to require annual district level assessments of students in bilingual programs – and the Department has been developing these protocols with the priority school districts for use in the 2000-2001 school year. For students in bilingual and ESL/special education – the three year exclusion will still apply to state assessments.

Attached are the Assessment Guidelines, 7th Edition, designed to assist you in making decisions about testing special student populations on the CMT/CAPT.

RECONCILIATION OF PUPIL COUNTS AND ABSENTEES

For each student in grades 4, 6, 8, 10, there is a cover sheet on the answer booklet that is completed for CMT or CAPT – and it includes key data on that student as well as his/her tested or exempted (from student grade level testing) status. In the past, the reconciliation of this data and the ED006 – October 1 enrollment data has been very difficult – and some towns have had a considerable number of “unaccounted-for” students. Beginning in 2000-2001, it is imperative that a complete and correct cover sheet be submitted for each student enrolled in school during the testing period. In order to report district and state scores by early February 2001, the Department must have the original submission of the cover sheets (in October 2000) reconciled to your enrollment count.

Some communities have had a number of students – not exempted but also not present – for the CMT/CAPT or the later make-up testing. When the state statute says that each student in grades 4, 6, 8, 10 shall be assessed, that implies that each district has taken the necessary steps to ensure that result.

With the use of CMT/CAPT data for state and federal grant programs, as well as for improving instruction and reporting on student achievement, the status of each child has become much more crucial.

Please understand that for some Connecticut school districts the new minimum CMT/CAPT participation rate for special education students will require a major change of local practice, but for most districts the 80+ percent expectation has been the practice or can be achieved without significant effort. The overall direction for our new generation of state tests is one of assessing every child, even if some small number are given alternate assessments. Please do not miss the opportunity this spring to inform your Planning and Placement Teams of these matters.

Please call the student assessment office (Susan Kennedy) at 860-566-4008, if you have questions about the enclosed guidelines. Call the special education office (George Dowaliby) at 860-807-2025, if you have questions about the PPT process or IDEA.

Thank you.

1998 CMT Participation Rates for Students with Disabilities

District	Total # Students with Disabilities, Grades 4, 6, & 8	# Students with Disabilities Tested	# Students with Disabilities Exempted	# Students with Disabilities Not Accounted For	Participation Rate %
Andover	11	10	0	1	91
Ansonia	96	53	38	5	55
Ansonia	96	53	38	5	55
Ashford	29	20	8	1	69
Ashford	29	20	8	1	69
Avon	66	56	9	1	85
Avon	66	56	9	1	85
Barkhamsted	22	11	10	1	50
Barkhamsted	22	11	10	1	50
Berlin	87	68	17	2	78
Berlin	87	68	17	2	78
Bethany	18	11	6	1	61
Bethany	18	11	6	1	61
Bethel	107	74	30	3	69
Bethel	107	74	30	3	69
Bloomfield	99	30	61	8	30
Bloomfield	99	30	61	8	30
Bolton	26	18	7	1	69
Bolton	26	18	7	1	69
Bozrah	13	10	1	2	77
Bozrah	13	10	1	2	77
Branford	135	111	22	2	82
Branford	135	111	22	2	82
Bridgeport	656	191	461	4	29
Bridgeport	656	191	461	4	29
Bristol	223	145	72	6	65
Bristol	223	145	72	6	65
Brookfield	49	34	12	3	69
Brookfield	49	34	12	3	69
Brooklyn	53	29	18	6	55
Brooklyn	53	29	18	6	55
Canaan	10	9	0	1	90
Canaan	10	9	0	1	90
Canterbury	42	41	1	0	98
Canterbury	42	41	1	0	98
Canton	43	39	4	0	91
Canton	43	39	4	0	91
Chaplin	16	11	4	1	69
Chaplin	16	11	4	1	69
Cheshire	136	111	22	3	82
Cheshire	136	111	22	3	82
Chester	13	13	0	0	100
Chester	13	13	0	0	100
Clinton	82	64	16	2	78
Clinton	82	64	16	2	78
Colchester	75	56	18	1	75
Colchester	75	56	18	1	75
Colebrook	8	6	2	0	75
Colebrook	8	6	2	0	75
Columbia	42	35	7	0	83

Cornwall	11	8	3	0	73
Coventry	52	40	9	3	77
Coventry	52	40	9	3	77
Cromwell	55	37	17	1	67
Cromwell	55	37	17	1	67
Danbury	332	156	156	20	47
Danbury	332	156	156	20	47
Darien	75	72	3	0	96
Darien	75	72	3	0	96
Deep River	24	20	4	0	83
Deep River	24	20	4	0	83
Derby	65	37	26	2	57
Derby	65	37	26	2	57
Eastford	7	5	2	0	71
Eastford	7	5	2	0	71
East Granby	23	18	5	0	78
East Granby	23	18	5	0	78
East Haddam	31	26	4	1	84
East Haddam	31	26	4	1	84
East Hampton	75	57	16	2	76
East Hampton	75	57	16	2	76
East Hartford	298	105	182	11	35
East Hartford	298	105	182	11	35
East Haven	79	40	35	4	51
East Haven	79	40	35	4	51
East Lyme	72	56	16	0	78
East Lyme	72	56	16	0	78
Easton	39	33	2	4	85
Easton	39	33	2	4	85
East Windsor	54	37	9	8	69
East Windsor	54	37	9	8	69
Ellington	44	36	8	0	82
Ellington	44	36	8	0	82
Enfield	197	154	42	1	78
Enfield	197	154	42	1	78
Essex	15	14	1	0	93
Essex	15	14	1	0	93
Fairfield	300	242	30	28	81
Fairfield	300	242	30	28	81
Farmington	72	60	11	1	83
Farmington	72	60	11	1	83
Franklin	6	4	0	2	67
Franklin	6	4	0	2	67
Glastonbury	170	141	19	10	83
Glastonbury	170	141	19	10	83
Granby	71	58	11	2	82
Granby	71	58	11	2	82
Greenwich	276	237	30	9	86
Greenwich	276	237	30	9	86
Griswold	48	43	3	2	90
Griswold	48	43	3	2	90
Groton	174	126	33	15	72
Groton	174	126	33	15	72
Guilford	138	112	20	6	81
Guilford	138	112	20	6	81
Hamden	222	159	58	5	72

Hampton	10	6	4	0	60
Hartford	875	313	524	38	36
Hartford	875	313	524	38	36
Hartland	8	7	1	0	88
Hartland	8	7	1	0	88
Hebron	23	18	5	0	78
Hebron	23	18	5	0	78
Kent	22	19	3	0	86
Kent	22	19	3	0	86
Killingly	82	42	37	3	51
Killingly	82	42	37	3	51
Lebanon	60	49	9	2	82
Lebanon	60	49	9	2	82
Ledyard	79	67	8	4	85
Ledyard	79	67	8	4	85
Lisbon	29	17	12	0	59
Lisbon	29	17	12	0	59
Litchfield	36	24	11	1	67
Litchfield	36	24	11	1	67
Madison	108	97	7	4	90
Madison	108	97	7	4	90
Manchester	227	140	84	3	62
Manchester	227	140	84	3	62
Mansfield	86	58	25	3	67
Mansfield	86	58	25	3	67
Marlborough	20	19	1	0	95
Marlborough	20	19	1	0	95
Meriden	373	191	165	17	51
Meriden	373	191	165	17	51
Middletown	226	115	99	12	51
Middletown	226	115	99	12	51
Milford	264	226	35	3	86
Milford	264	226	35	3	86
Monroe	115	75	36	4	65
Monroe	115	75	36	4	65
Montville	95	61	30	4	64
Montville	95	61	30	4	64
Naugatuck	260	132	118	10	51
Naugatuck	260	132	118	10	51
New Britain	355	153	195	7	43
New Britain	355	153	195	7	43
New Canaan	71	70	0	1	99
New Canaan	71	70	0	1	99
New Fairfield	82	65	14	3	79
New Fairfield	82	65	14	3	79
New Hartford	19	14	5	0	74
New Hartford	19	14	5	0	74
New Haven	600	189	397	14	32
New Haven	600	189	397	14	32
Newington	84	72	9	3	86
Newington	84	72	9	3	86
New London	173	77	81	15	45
New London	173	77	81	15	45
New Milford	159	123	27	9	77
New Milford	159	123	27	9	77
Newtown	103	91	9	3	88

Norfolk	4	4	0	0	100
North Branford	91	57	30	4	63
North Branford	91	57	30	4	63
North Canaan	20	16	3	1	80
North Canaan	20	16	3	1	80
North Haven	47	35	11	1	74
North Haven	47	35	11	1	74
N. Stonington	38	23	7	8	61
N. Stonington	38	23	7	8	61
Norwalk	248	95	152	1	38
Norwalk	248	95	152	1	38
Norwich	186	121	58	7	65
Norwich	186	121	58	7	65
Old Saybrook	44	38	4	2	86
Old Saybrook	44	38	4	2	86
Orange	53	46	6	1	87
Orange	53	46	6	1	87
Oxford	48	31	17	0	65
Oxford	48	31	17	0	65
Plainfield	111	71	33	7	64
Plainfield	111	71	33	7	64
Plainville	58	50	8	0	86
Plainville	58	50	8	0	86
Plymouth	55	41	13	1	75
Plymouth	55	41	13	1	75
Pomfret	18	16	2	0	89
Pomfret	18	16	2	0	89
Portland	46	27	17	2	59
Portland	46	27	17	2	59
Preston	29	19	6	4	66
Preston	29	19	6	4	66
Putnam	60	41	17	2	68
Putnam	60	41	17	2	68
Redding	43	40	3	0	93
Redding	43	40	3	0	93
Ridgefield	95	87	8	0	92
Ridgefield	95	87	8	0	92
Rocky Hill	71	48	16	7	68
Rocky Hill	71	48	16	7	68
Salem	16	13	3	0	81
Salem	16	13	3	0	81
Salisbury	28	19	8	1	68
Salisbury	28	19	8	1	68
Scotland	6	4	1	1	67
Scotland	6	4	1	1	67
Seymour	111	82	22	7	74
Seymour	111	82	22	7	74
Sharon	18	12	6	0	67
Sharon	18	12	6	0	67
Shelton	114	86	28	0	75
Shelton	114	86	28	0	75
Sherman	11	9	2	0	82
Sherman	11	9	2	0	82
Simsbury	123	107	12	4	87
Simsbury	123	107	12	4	87
Somers	53	42	8	3	79

Southington	271	205	62	4	76
South Windsor	141	118	21	2	84
South Windsor	141	118	21	2	84
Sprague	13	8	5	0	62
Sprague	13	8	5	0	62
Stafford	74	54	19	1	73
Stafford	74	54	19	1	73
Stamford	459	273	157	29	59
Stamford	459	273	157	29	59
Sterling	26	17	9	0	65
Sterling	26	17	9	0	65
Stonington	91	64	19	8	70
Stonington	91	64	19	8	70
Stratford	220	137	81	2	62
Stratford	220	137	81	2	62
Suffield	57	51	5	1	89
Suffield	57	51	5	1	89
Thomaston	49	33	13	3	67
Thomaston	49	33	13	3	67
Thompson	47	42	3	2	89
Thompson	47	42	3	2	89
Tolland	66	53	11	2	80
Tolland	66	53	11	2	80
Torrington	179	110	69	0	61
Torrington	179	110	69	0	61
Trumbull	166	132	32	2	80
Trumbull	166	132	32	2	80
Union	3	3	0	0	100
Union	3	3	0	0	100
Vernon	162	106	39	17	65
Vernon	162	106	39	17	65
Voluntown	18	17	0	1	94
Voluntown	18	17	0	1	94
Wallingford	176	122	49	5	69
Wallingford	176	122	49	5	69
Waterbury	471	254	165	52	54
Waterbury	471	254	165	52	54
Waterford	86	61	24	1	71
Waterford	86	61	24	1	71
Watertown	86	42	44	0	49
Watertown	86	42	44	0	49
Westbrook	20	14	5	1	70
Westbrook	20	14	5	1	70
West Hartford	292	200	61	31	68
West Hartford	292	200	61	31	68
West Haven	240	155	79	6	65
West Haven	240	155	79	6	65
Weston	74	66	7	1	89
Weston	74	66	7	1	89
Westport	132	123	7	2	93
Westport	132	123	7	2	93
Wethersfield	98	78	19	1	80
Wethersfield	98	78	19	1	80
Willington	30	23	7	0	77
Willington	30	23	7	0	77
Wilton	103	92	6	5	89

Winchester	52	32	16	4	62
Windham	154	88	51	15	57
Windham	154	88	51	15	57
Windsor	124	84	35	5	68
Windsor	124	84	35	5	68
Windsor Locks	78	52	24	2	67
Windsor Locks	78	52	24	2	67
Wolcott	78	66	12	0	85
Wolcott	78	66	12	0	85
Woodbridge	38	33	5	0	87
Woodbridge	38	33	5	0	87
Woodstock	33	26	4	3	79
Woodstock	33	26	4	3	79
Regional #4	32	26	6	0	81
Regional #4	32	26	6	0	81
Regional #5	55	49	4	2	89
Regional #5	55	49	4	2	89
Regional #6	25	22	2	1	88
Regional #6	25	22	2	1	88
Regional #7	32	27	3	2	84
Regional #7	32	27	3	2	84
Regional #8	22	21	1	0	95
Regional #8	22	21	1	0	95
Regional #10	78	64	8	6	82
Regional #10	78	64	8	6	82
Regional #11	8	7	1	0	88
Regional #11	8	7	1	0	88
Regional #12	30	26	4	0	87
Regional #12	30	26	4	0	87
Regional #13	47	32	15	0	68
Regional #13	47	32	15	0	68
Regional #14	83	52	30	1	63
Regional #14	83	52	30	1	63
Regional #15	124	109	14	1	88
Regional #15	124	109	14	1	88
Regional #16	60	56	3	1	93
Regional #16	60	56	3	1	93
Regional #17	88	85	3	0	97
Regional #17	88	85	3	0	97
Regional #18	49	41	5	3	84
Regional #18	49	41	5	3	84
DCF	37	13	23	1	35
DCF	37	13	23	1	35
ERG A	859	779	62	18	91
ERG A	859	779	62	18	91
ERG B	2454	1961	376	117	80
ERG B	2454	1961	376	117	80
ERG C	1416	1118	257	41	79
ERG C	1416	1118	257	41	79
ERG D	2075	1553	470	52	75
ERG D	2075	1553	470	52	75
ERG E	618	464	125	29	75
ERG E	618	464	125	29	75
ERG F	2497	1669	742	86	67
ERG F	2497	1669	742	86	67
ERG G	720	512	173	35	71

ERG H	2888	1529	1238	121	53
ERG I	3284	1265	1874	145	39
ERG I	3284	1265	1874	145	39
Connecticut	16848	10863	5340	645	64
Connecticut	16848	10863	5340	645	64